

**Response on Dual Enrollment to Kindergarten to College Work Group**  
**Higher Education Representatives of the Dual Enrollment Ad Hoc Committee**

From the perspective of the higher education representatives on the dual Enrollment Ad Hoc Committee, the problem confronting our committee – and our state – is this: If current trends continue, within ten years only 17 out of every 100 freshmen in a Montana high school today will have a college degree. If Montana is to compete in a global, knowledge-based economy, those trends cannot continue.

Montana's Board of Regents of Higher Education has adopted strategic planning goals aimed at reversing those trends. One approach is a comprehensive, widely available, and well-promoted menu of "dual enrollment" opportunities, whether provided as college courses for which students receive both high school credit and college credit ("dual-credit" classes) or as college classes for which high school students receive only college credit ("college-credit-only" classes). High school students with dual enrollment credits are more likely to go to college, succeed in college, and complete a college degree than high school students without those credits. Dual enrollment students complete their college degrees in less time and, therefore, at less expense. In addition, they are more engaged in their high school courses and are less likely to drop out of high school than high school students who do not participate in dual enrollment classes.

All fifty states allow some form of dual enrollment, and Montana is no exception. In fact, several Montana colleges provided some form of dual enrollment prior to the enactment of the "Running Start" legislation in 2001. Since the "Running Start" legislation was enacted – partly because of the pre-existing dual enrollment practices and partly because of circumstances and definitions unforeseen by the legislation – various problems with dual enrollment practices have surfaced. The problems must be addressed if Montana is to use dual enrollment as an effective, well-promoted, and broadly accessible approach to getting more students to pursue and complete postsecondary education.

**3) What are the recommended solutions for solving the problem?**

The ad hoc committee was unable to agree upon recommendations to the three unresolved issues related to dual enrollment. As higher education and K-12 representatives, we are submitting separate recommendations to those issues. However, the entire group was mutually interested in a specific area for collaboration that might build a more collegial environment in which dual enrollment opportunities could grow. That area is a "ladder to college" proposal incorporating the following components:

- Encouragement of all high school juniors to participate in college admissions/proficiency examinations that will give an indicator of their college readiness, particularly in mathematics and composition (MUS Writing Assessment, ACT with Writing Assessment, SAT with Writing Assessment)
- Use of examination scores for collaborative advising of "college-ready" students into dual enrollment courses in composition and mathematics as seniors;
- Recruitment and appointment of appropriately qualified and mentored high school faculty as adjunct faculty for the composition and mathematics courses.

- A tracking model to document the achievement of improved college-going rates and degree completion rates of Ladder to College students.

**4) What actions do the higher education members [revision emphasized] of your work group recommend for the Board of Education? Explain.**

- a) How does Montana ensure that dual-credit courses “supplement but do not supplant” the high school curriculum?** No action is necessary. Current statute (ARM 10.55.906[4], attached) recognizes the authority and the appropriateness of local school districts to determine whether a course offered by a third-party provider meets a high school graduation requirement – whether that course is taught at another high school, a correspondence school, a home school, or a postsecondary institution. Because courses meeting high school graduation requirements vary from school district to school district, this determination should be made at the local level.

In 2005 the Dual Enrollment Task Force responded to the concerns of MEA and other groups by incorporating the “supplement, not supplant” language in its recommendations to the P-20 Committee. The language was intended to communicate that, although **individual** students may seek courses not offered by the local school district to fulfill educational goals, every Montana school district continues to have an obligation to provide courses and programs of study that allow **all students** to complete the district’s high school graduation requirements. A school district cannot rely on a postsecondary institution to assume some of this obligation for the high school population as a whole. We in higher education continue to support that interpretation.

Our K-12 counterparts on the work group maintain that dual-credit courses should not be used, even by the **individual** student, to “supplant” courses meeting graduation requirements. Such an approach renders dual-credit courses meaningless since they then become college-credit-only courses. For many, if not most, of Montana’s dual enrollment students today, the dual-credit designation makes no difference: they do not need the college course to meet their high school graduation requirements. But some students do, and they should not be summarily excluded from an option that would be open to them if the alternative course were a home school course, a correspondence course, or a course from another high school.

The reasons an individual student selects a college course to meet a high school graduation requirement are as varied as high school students’ interests, abilities, and circumstances. One student may want the challenge of advanced course work. Another may want to reduce the time – and the expense – to complete a college degree. Others want to take a course unavailable at the high school to meet a particular graduation requirement – e.g., German, instead of Spanish – or a course that *is* available at the high school, but is scheduled such that it blocks other educational opportunities they want to pursue. Local school districts are in the best position to decide whether to honor these individual students’ choices to substitute a dual-credit course for a high school course. The practice of allowing dual-credit courses to meet high school graduation requirements is the established practice nationwide. According to the June 2006 WICHE study of accelerated learning options:

Most often, when a student earns both high school and college credit, the state-level policy explicitly mandates that the credit also apply toward high school graduation requirements (*Moving the Needle on Access and Success*, p. 11).

The concerns of our K-12 counterparts about “wholesale” exodus of high school students enticed by dual-credit opportunities, with the consequent inability to offer the high school curriculum and comply with state, regional and national requirements, are not supported by the data from other states.

- b) What credentials, if any, should be required for teaching dual-credit courses?** A dual-credit course is a college course accepted by a local school district to meet graduation requirements. As a college course, the faculty should have credentials required by the college.

School districts in Montana currently accept courses taught in home schools, private schools, correspondence school, and public schools outside of Montana – in spite of the differences in or absence of licensure for the teachers of those courses. College courses submitted to a local school district for consideration as potential dual-credit courses should be reviewed – and, if suitable, accepted – on at least the same terms. Given the ideals of connectivity and mutual respect between high schools and colleges in Montana, we would hope for an even higher level of acceptance of courses taught by college faculty, whose credentials meet the requirements of the Board of Regents and Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities.

Current research suggests that concerns about K-12 licensure and compliance with regional and national requirements have not arisen in other states, which face the same compliance issues.

- c) How will the distance-delivered dual-credit coursework comply with applicable standards and statutes?** A dual-credit course is a college course accepted by a local school district to meet graduation requirements. The relevant standards and statutes for faculty credentials and the educational environment are those governing the college delivering the course, particularly since online courses do not usually even “take place” on either a high school or a college campus.

Currently, the one Montana college actively promoting dual-credit course work online has taken care to observe the restrictions imposed on distance-delivered high school courses (ARM 10.55.907, attached), even though the courses are college courses comprised mainly of traditional college students. The college did so because the statute provided the prospective high school student with a framework for support in the dual-credit experience. However, applying the requirements of 10.55.907 to a college course – especially one delivered in the typical, asynchronous model for online delivery – takes away some of the attractiveness of this model and may present an undue burden for the high school student and the school district. The requirements also change the nature of the course itself, making it a high school class monitored by a K-12 faculty instead of a college class that happens to

include high school students with college students. Finally, the requirements create an inequitable learning environment in a course that also includes traditional college students.